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MARYLAND FISHERIES

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A LIMITED DREDGING SEASON FOR POTOMAC RIVER PROPOSED

An Explanation of the Reasons therefor

AFTER a number of conferences between Fishery Commissioner Richard Armstrong of Virginia and Conservation Commissioner Swepson Earle of Maryland, a plan was worked out whereby the Potomac River should be open to dredges of limited size and weight from November 1 to December 31, inclusive, each year.

Following this agreement, and with the approval of the Governor, a bill was prepared and introduced in the Senate of Maryland by Hon. Joseph Cook Webster of Calvert County. This bill, which is known as Senate Bill 164, was referred to the Chesapeake Bay and Tributaries Committee. It reads as follows:

"It shall not be lawful for any citizen of Maryland or Virginia to take or catch oysters with a scoop, scrape or dredge, or any similar instrument in the waters of the Potomac river, between the first day of January and thirty-first day of October, both dates inclusive, of each

year; or with scoop, scrape, dredge or any similar instrument having a tooth bar more than forty-two (42) inches in length, measuring from the outside teeth, on dredges used in dredging on rock bottoms, and forty-four (44) inches in length, measuring from the outside teeth, on dredges used in dredging on mud bottoms, and of a weight not exceeding two hundred (200) pounds. No "devil catcher," "devil diver" or any similar device shall be had in possession or used on any dredge boat or vessel by any captain or any other person for the purpose of being attached to the dredge for steering same to the bottom."

At a hearing before the Senate Committee on Chesapeake Bay and Tributaries on this bill, which occurred March 9, a good deal of opposition developed. To fully explain the Potomac River situation and show the necessity for the proposed legislation, a complete statement was prepared and sent by the Conservation Commissioner to all members of the committee, both in the House as well as in the Senate. This statement reads as follows:

"Supplementing my remarks on Senate Bill No. 164—'Opening the Potomac River'—before the Senate Chesapeake Bay and Tributaries Committee on Thursday, I respectfully submit the following:

"The discussion seemed to be confined almost exclusively to the question of whether the violations on Potomac River could be curbed by the States of Maryland and Virginia. As a result some of the most important features of the bill were overlooked. It is believed these overbalance any other questions touched upon at the meeting.

"These features may be outlined briefly as follows:

1—The advantage of reopening Potomac River for dredging under certain restrictions as a State-wide measure, as compared with the effects of keeping the river closed as a local measure.

2—The unavoidable discrimination against Maryland watermen should Virginia repeal the existing law and reopen the Potomac River without Maryland concurring.

3—The cost to the State of enforcement officers, boats and equipment—necessary to carry out our law—as compared to revenue received and the per cent of the enforcement cost Virginia will pay.

"When it was first proposed by me two years ago to close Potomac River and give it a rest, I had in mind to do so for only a certain length of time, or for certain oyster bars. To see how far the State could go, I obtained an opinion from the Attorney General, dated March 6, 1931, as to whether the State could enact such legislation. This opinion was to the effect that we could close the entire river for a certain length of time and still be concurrent with the Virginia Act, but it would not be a Concurrent Act if certain bars were closed.

"The Legislature, however, saw fit to enact a law, as proposed by Senator Walter J. Mitchell, closing the entire river for an unlimited time and later when the question of whether Governor Ritchie should sign the bill or not arose, there was a strong delegation from Somerset County and other oyster sections of the State protesting against the Act becoming a law and urging the Governor to veto the bill.

"It was my impression that Governor Ritchie would not have signed the bill had he not had in mind, the same as I, that the river could be opened when the two States thought it justifiable.

"The Conservation Department and the Virginia Commission of Fisheries have felt for some time that conditions in Potomac River are such that opening the river to dredging for a limited period of time was justifiable, and we came to an agreement on the time and manner for reopening this river—hence the introduction of Senate Bill No. 164.

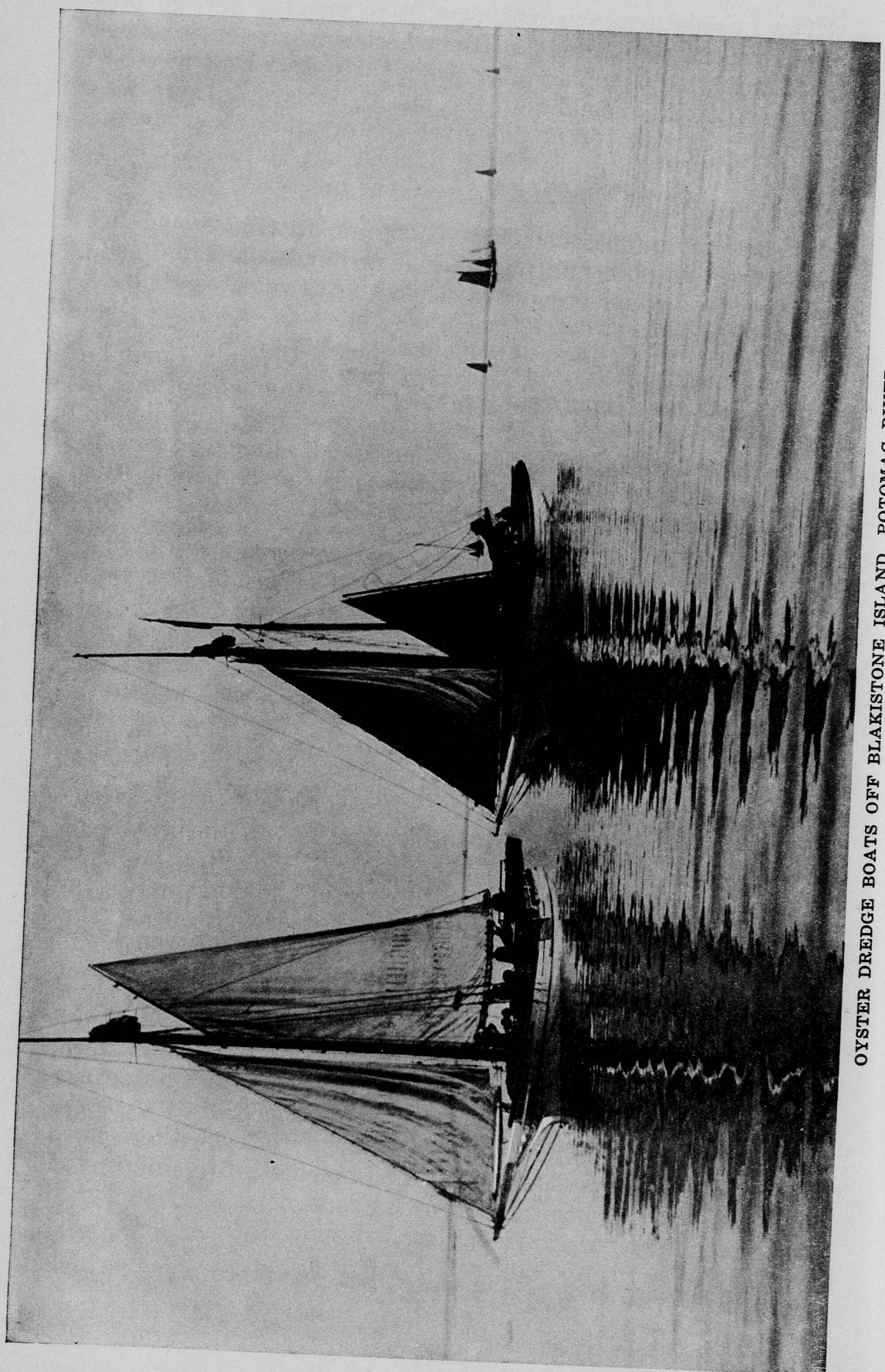
"My recommendations, following a survey made in October, 1932, were fully set forth in my annual report of last year, part of which is as follows:

"'It is most gratifying to see the results of the short rest given the bars in this great river, after a period of continuous use since the signing of the Compact of 1785. However, it would be a backward step to permit the opening of Potomac River under the same conditions existing prior to the closing. To assure the maintenance of an oyster supply in this river, regulatory and protective measures must be placed in force.'

"In the past, Potomac River has been legislated for as the dredging waters of the entire State and not as the waters of adjacent counties. As a result, number of tongers come from the Eastern Shore, particularly Dorchester and Somerset Counties, for a livelihood, and in the past, when dredging was more profitable in our waters, there were as many as 250 boats operating in this river, each of which maintained a crew of from four to seven persons.

"In 1930, the last year in which the Potomac was open, there were 204 dredge boats licensed to operate in Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River. During the season 1931-1932, there were 168, and during the present season 1932-33, there have been but 88 licensed; showing an immediate drop-off in the first year of 36 licenses, throwing out of employment 180 watermen engaged in dredging.

"The second year of the closed season, there were 80 less



OYSTER DREDGE BOATS OFF BLAKISTONE ISLAND, POTOMAC RIVER

dredge boats than the year previous, which, averaging five people to the boat, would make a total of 400 thrown out of employment, or a total of 580 since the river has been closed.

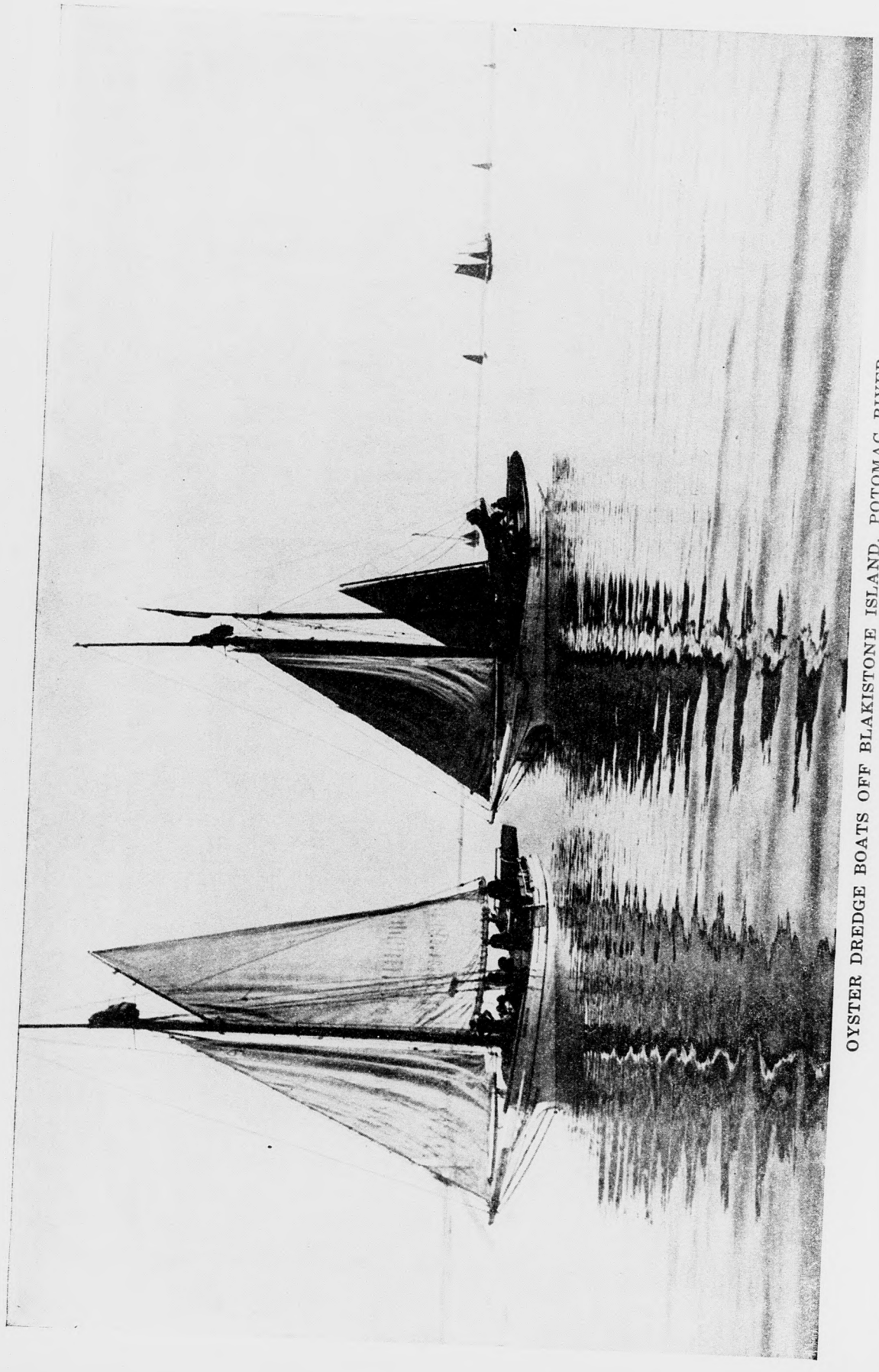
"Prior to 1900, when the dredge boats working in the waters of Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River numbered more than 600, the crews required to operate the dredges frequently came from other states, including many foreigners just recently arrived from the other side. The situation today on the dredge boat is entirely different. More than 90% of the crews are Marylanders and constitute a better class of citizenship, with dependent families.

"This naturally affects every activity which depends upon the oyster business as a source of income, such as shipyards, merchandise stores, etc. The foregoing are the Maryland figures and we have no reason to think that Virginia would not suffer comparatively. If the Potomac River were opened, I am of the opinion that the number of dredge boats licensed would increase considerably.

"Our records show that as far as the citizens of Charles County are concerned, there are 156 oyster tongers in that County. Of this number, Inspector Gibson, who has one of our boats at the mouth of the Wicomico River, is able to check the name of but *one* who now resorts to Potomac River for a livelihood as far as oystering is concerned. The other inspector, Mr. Wilmer, who appeared before you, states in his letter of February 21, to us, that he does not think there are over *six* from his County (Charles) tonging in his immediate neighborhood. The tongers of St. Mary's, however, do resort to the Potomac River because the rocks are more conveniently located as far as harbors and river entrances into Potomac River are concerned, and it is also more thickly populated along the water front. Even when the Potomac was open to dredging, the tongers of St. Mary's and Charles Counties resorted to the dredging rocks on September 15, and had the privilege of taking the cream or select oysters before the dredging season started on November 1.

"However, the Potomac River has always been considered the dredging waters of the entire State as much as Chesapeake Bay, and is particularly unique in the fact that this particular river is the only one in the State to which every tonger and dredger of the entire State may resort to oyster. In all of the other tributaries of Chesapeake Bay tonging is held exclusive

OYSTER DREDGE BOATS OFF BLAKISTONE ISLAND, POTOMAC RIVER



OYSTER DREDGE BOATS OFF BLAKISTONE ISLAND, POTOMAC RIVER

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to the residents of that particular county. In addition to this, Potomac River is further unique in the fact that it is worked in common with another State—Virginia—the only instance of which we know where concurrent legislation is necessary to control the waters of a common fishery ground. It, therefore, must be remembered that in considering the Potomac, it is necessary that we consider the possibility of what the State of Virginia can and will do in connection with such legislation. On this matter I will touch further when we speak of the possible results should Senate Bill No. 164 fail.

"We might compare for a moment the question of tongers who are affected in St. Mary's and Charles Counties.

"St. Mary's normally has 674 licensed tongers, approximately half of which do not work in Potomac River; and Charles County has 156 of which number but five seem to work in the Potomac at present. Assuming that half of those from St. Mary's County work in the Potomac, we have but 342 tongers in these two counties who resort to this river for a livelihood at this time, against 680 persons directly thrown out of employment by reason of the river being closed to dredging. It is preposterous to think that 342 tongers in these two counties could possibly utilize all of the oyster rocks of the Potomac, extending for 50 miles, in addition to the oyster rocks in the Wicomico, Patuxent, St. Catherine's Sound, Breton and St. Clement's Bays, St. Mary's St. George's Rivers, and other tributaries. There are a number of bars where the water is too deep and the bottom is not such that tongers could reach oysters and the only means of taking them would be by dredge or patent tongs.

"In the meantime, we have shown that the tongers of Charles County will not be affected because they are not many in number and the tongers of St. Mary's County still have ample waters in which to work exclusively as they have in the past.

"In addition to the above, the indirect result of obtaining the Potomac grade of oyster (which for he past year has been the highest priced oyster caught in the Bay or tributary waters of Maryland) would necessarily help to restore the oyster packing business of the State, which is now very much on the decline owing to the fact that while we have sufficient oysters, we have not the better quality and this oyster is very much in demand. At present to obtain oysters to supplant the Potomac River ones, the packers must resort to Virginia and New Jersey for their supply.

"The oyster packers referred to as being benefited in this, would be those of Baltimore City, Cambridge, Crisfield, Tilghmans and possibly other oyster centers, while on the other hand there is but one packer in Charles County on the Potomac and about three in St. Mary's who would be directly affected. The packers in these Counties possibly get their supply of Potomac River oysters from the tongers, but if there were more packers, the sentiment, no doubt, from these two Counties would be that dredging should be permitted in order to get their supply.

"The second feature referred to regarding the effect on Maryland citizens should Virginia repeal the existing law and reopen the Potomac, is very important and should not be overlooked by the citizens of this State. The results foreseen, should Virginia alone reopen the river, are based upon past experience and not mere conjecture. They would in fact be legal and could only be corrected by legislative acts on the part of this State concurrent with the Acts of Virginia.

"Quoting from the opinion of the Attorney General, dated March 6, 1931, recorded in Volume 16, of the Reports and Official Opinions of the Attorney General, Page 76, as to whether once legislating concurrent with Virginia, it would be possible to repeal our law, he states:

" 'Clearly, the Legislature of Maryland might at any time repeal any legislation of this character without the consent of the State of Virginia and without reserving the right to do so. If this were not the case then every act passed by either State with the consent of the other would *ipso facto* constitute a subsequent compact or modification of the existing compact between the States, and require the consent of Congress before it would become effective. In order to avoid this palpable absurdity, it is necessary to hold that either State may at any time withdraw its consent to existing legislation.'

"It is, therefore, recognized by our Attorney General that Virginia would have the right to repeal the present law closing this river the same as this State has, we must necessarily look to the result which would follow should we take this step. It is as follows:

"Maryland would have on her statute books a law prohibiting her citizens to dredge in Potomac River and Virginia would not have such a law. The citizens of Virginia could, without restraint, dredge at any time in or out of season in the Potomac River if her laws permitted it without any restrictions from the State of Maryland, while Maryland citizens would be restricted. A similar instance of this kind is exist-

ing today. We have a situation where the menhaden steamers of Virginia are permitted to fish with purse nets in the Potomac. Maryland citizens cannot and do not. Virginia citizens may catch fish which are under or oversized while fishing beside a Marylander in the same waters who would be held strictly to the Maryland legal size. (See published Pamphlet on Potomac River, title "Oyster and Fish Survey," dated February 4, 1931, Page 7.) The present law between the two States on the fisheries of Potomac River provides:

"'It shall be lawful for any citizen of the State of Maryland or of the State of Virginia to take fish, oysters or crabs from Potomac River after complying with the requirements of the laws of the State of which he is a citizen for the taking of fish, oysters or crabs from the waters of such State; and any citizen of either State who takes fish, oysters or crabs from the Potomac River without having complied with the requirements of the law of his State as to the taking of fish, oysters or crabs in its own waters shall be considered guilty of violating the laws of the State of which he is a citizen, and shall be prosecuted according to such laws.'

"The law further provides that all offenses committed against the provisions of Sections 71 to 79 (Article 72—the oyster laws) by a citizen of either State shall be punished by any magistrate or court of the state of which he is a citizen. If, therefore, an offense be committed against our laws by a Virginia dredger at the present time, he could be delivered to the authorities of Virginia and prosecuted under the Maryland act. However, if Virginia repeals this law, it would not be a violation of the Virginia law or the Concurrent law between the two States. Therefore, the Maryland officials could not deliver or at least should not deliver a Virginia offender to the Virginia authorities who would then have no authority to prosecute. It would be nonsensical to do so, and we are not doing so in the case of the menhaden fishermen and other violations of our laws in connection with fishing which are not in violation of the Virginia laws.

"It is easy, therefore, to understand that in addition to the discriminations which now exist by reason of the legislation between the two States, continuing on the statute books of Maryland a law imposing a burden upon our citizens would be further discriminating against a people who are already overburdened.

"Would it be to the advantage of Maryland to give all of its rights to Virginia, especially at a time when to reserve her rights would mean furnishing employment and a livelihood to the dredgers who are now eager to work in these

waters? The continuance of this bill against the wish of the State as a whole, which I am now contending, would be to admit that Potomac River in the future would be considered local waters with the citizens of these two counties being willing to give up all the right to the advantage of Virginia.

"The third element (which is by no means the least important) entering into working the Potomac River in common, is the cost to the State of Maryland of enforcing the law which is not popular with the watermen of the States of Maryland and Virginia.

"The experience of this Department, as well as the Virginia Commission of Fisheries, during the last two years while this river has been closed against dredging, is a sad one. While I told the Committee a few days ago that enforcement was possible if we had the proper machinery with which to work, you will recall that the Virginia Commissioner of Fisheries' representative, Inspector Heflin, stated to you that by reason of lack of funds he could not say that the State of Virginia would be any more able to enforce this law than she has been in the past.

"Commissioner Armstrong of Virginia, has written me that *'with the limited funds now at our disposal, it will be very doubtful if we can maintain adequate police to enforce the present law. Also—the idea of sending people to jail for infringing this law is very distasteful to the people on our side of the river. It entails heavy financial expenditures to convict offenders and at this time, if the bread winner of a family is jailed, it simply means the care of his people falls on other citizens; which, together with their own burdens makes the procedure most unpopular and we have had and will continue to have few if any convictions under the present law.'*

"He further states that 'unless some extremely convincing argument appears to change our minds before next January, a bill will most certainly be offered in the Virginia Legislature to put in effect a law similar to the one you are advocating.'

"One of the greatest forces which have helped aggravate the cause and enforce the present law, is the fact that the citizens of the two States who are violators do not receive equal punishment. Maryland blames Virginia for not enforcing her part of it and Virginia blames Maryland for not doing her duty in connection therewith. It is practical to see that arrests can be made by both States. The few arrests of which

we know that Virginia has made are those in which some one of our officers have participated. Out of approximately 15 arrests of Virginians made either wholly or jointly by our officials, we know of but three convictions, some of these being colored people, while the white men on the same boat were practically freed.

"On the other hand, Maryland has made six arrests of her citizens, four in the fall of 1931 and two in February, 1933. Four trials in Charles County are now pending and we are not at all blaming the Court of Charles County for not inflicting punishment before this, because it is undoubtedly unjust to fine our citizens if Virginia does not do likewise with hers. The cases pending at St. Mary's are very recent and we have not had an opportunity to say what its court will do. We have no doubt that both courts will eventually punish these offenders.

"Aside from the arrests which we have actually made, there have been times when the officers have been subjected to mistreatment by those 'resisting arrest' either by force or threats. Upon one occasion two of our officers operating one of our boats were compelled to let violators go, because they were outnumbered by handscrapers and shot at, and actually struck by scattered shot. In other cases, our officers were more fortunate in making a stand because there were more in their crew, and they were able not only to withstand the shots fired at them first, but were able to fight off the violators. Those persons who shot at our officers, however, were not apprehended.

"The force which we are now using to police the Potomac River is comprised of five units:

1—The upper seed area where Inspector Wilmer together with one other of his crew has charge.

2—From Swan Point to the mouth of Wicomico River where Deputy Commander Wise has the power boat KENT with a crew of four, including himself.

3—The mouth of Wicomico River, patrolled by Inspector Simms at Rock Point.

4—Off the mouth of Breton Bay where Deputy Commander Plowden operates with a crew of four, including himself.

5—Off the mouth of St. Mary's River across to Ragged Point as far as the mouth of the Potomac River, patrolled by Deputy Commander Cullison.

"These forces comprise a total of 14 men, constituting the

patrol of Potomac River whose salaries, rations, gasoline, railway costs, over a period of seven and a half months, amount to $9,330. To properly patrol these waters which extend over a distance of 50 miles, it is necessary to patrol at night as well as during the day, and this naturally requires faster boats and more men. We have estimated that it would take at least three fast boats to supplement the present force and three additional men. This extra patrol, in addition to purchasing and equipping three boats at a total of $4,500, would cost the State $2,450 for the seven and a half months, which brings the final estimate of cost for the Potomac River patrol to $11,780 during the oyster season. This does not include the assistance which the State Steamer MCLANE renders in the Potomac during the season.

The State receives in return for this, the license fee for tongers from St. Mary's and Charles Counties to tong in that river exclusively. It is estimated that there are 400 who pay a license fee of $5.00 each, or a total revenue of $2,000. The loss from the fall off in the 116 dredge boats amounts to $5,220 in license fees, which would make our net loss in fully trying to enforce the present law, amount to $14,780 with no assurance of what Virginia will do toward better enforcement.

"The Virginia patrol force is not by any means as large as the one maintained by Maryland. It has one boat at Colonial Beach and another at Ragged Point, and the Virginia police steamer COMMODORE MAURY, when urgently needed. Just what is the cost of operating this force, I am unable to say, but the boats are not as large nor manned with as many men as ours.

"Conservation does not always mean prohibition, but the conserving of the State's sea-food resources under proper regulatory laws for the citizens of the State as a whole. The Conservation Department is often misunderstood when it is endeavoring to protect the resources under its supervision by law enforcement. It is my desire, as Commissioner, to cooperate to the fullest extent with the members of your Honorable Committees in doing that which is best for the citizens of Maryland and especially the watermen of our State.

Respectfully yours,

SWEPSON EARLE,
Commissioner."

MARYLAND FISHERIES

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY BY CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT,
SWEPSON EARLE, Commissioner.

No. 21 BALTIMORE, MARYLAND MARCH, 1933

BUT ONE THING TO DO

Reprinted from *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*, March 17, 1933.

The heads of the Conservation Departments of Maryland and Virginia both believe the Potomac River, which has been closed by joint action to dredging for more than two years, should be reopened for dredging from November 1 to January 1. They would take the step because they say they believe the rest given the bars has so restored them as to warrant their opening for a limited period. If that is not reason enough, it is added that policing the river has been expensive and the results unsatisfactory. Lastly, Virginia, it is understood, proposes to proceed in the matter regardless of what Maryland does.

In view of these facts there seems to be nothing left for Maryland to do except to follow suit. But as with pretty much every other proposal concerning our fisheries, when the interests of a locality are found to run counter to the interests of the State, the locality puts up a fight—and often wins out. In this instance Charles and St. Mary's wish to keep the river closed to dredging, so that their tongers may reap the benefit. Since Virginia would permit dredging, to bar out Marylanders would be to carry the notion of local privilege to a ridiculous extreme.

The Legislature has done some remarkable things in catering to the wishes of first one and then another of the tidewater counties. But the Potomac River, unlike the waters of other tributaries of the Chesapeake in which adjacent counties are given exclusive rights, is open to all comers. And, since Virginia is going to dredge, for the Legislature to undertake to prevent Marylanders from exercising the same right would be wholly unjustified discrimination and put upon the State a job of law enforcement that would be impossible.

DARK GILLED OYSTERS CAUSE CONCERN IN OTHER STATES

MR. W. S. HAMILL, Director of the Maryland Development Section of the Baltimore Association of Commerce, recently made a business inspection trip to the oyster-producing areas of the States of New Jersey and New York, visiting such important points as Bivalve, N. J., and Sayville and Greenport, Long Island. In his capacity as Director of the State Development Activities of the Baltimore Association of Commerce, Mr. Hamill is interested in the promotion, as well as the more intensive utilization and development, of the fishing industry and also of other natural resources of the State.

While on his trip north, Mr. Hamill had ample opportunity to inspect the fishing areas and also to observe the operation of the shucking and packing houses. He found that certain of these areas were not without disturbing problems of their own. For example, Mr. Hamill found that in one of the oyster-producing sections the growers were concerned about the color of the gills of the oysters, which for some undetermined reason, are very dark. While this factor has not affected the quality of the oyster, it was said to have reduced its desirability as a market product.

EAST COAST STATES FOLLOW MARYLAND'S LEAD TO BAR JAP OYSTERS

COINCIDENT with the introduction of a bill in the Maryland Legislature to prevent the importation of Japanese oysters in the shell for the purpose of planting in the waters of Chesapeake Bay, the Conservation Commissioner started a movement for concerted action on the part of the Eastern States to ban this shell-fish from the Atlantic and Gulf Coast waters.

Letters were sent by the Commissioner to 13 Coast and Gulf States pointing out the dangers incident to the introduction of the Japanese seed-oyster. As has been brought out a number of times in this magazine, as well as in the daily press, the greater rapidity of growth, coupled with extraordinary fertility of the Japanese oyster and its ready capacity for hybridizing, as shown by Government and State experiments,

would soon establish it firmly in the East Coast waters and gradually crowd out the native species. An example of this danger is found in the experience of the oyster farmers of France. Alarmed by the decline of their fishery, Portugese oysters, a larger, coarser, more prolific form than the northern European oyster, were introduced on the oyster beds of France. The result has been the gradual crowding out of the French oyster, which in many sections has already been entirely supplanted by the Portugese variety. In addition to the inferiority in quality and flavor of the Oriental bivalve, there is also danger that its introduction will bring in new and dangerous marine parasites.

As this magazine goes to press, it is most gratifying to be able to report that the responses thus far to the letters addressed to Fishery Commissioners of the several Gulf and Coastal States indicates a general recognition of the danger presented by the introduction of the Japanese oyster and a complete willingness to cooperate in excluding the "alien." Some of the replies are quoted.

Mr. Richard Armstrong, Commissioner of Fisheries of Virginia states:

"We will be able, I think, to prevent any Japanese oysters getting in here, and when the Legislature meets next time, we will get a law on it."

Mr. Arthur L. Clark, Superintendent, State Board of Fisheries and Game, Connecticut:

"I want to assure you, that so far as this Department may have any influence in the matter, we fully recognize the danger to our oyster industry in permitting the introduction of the Japanese oyster, and will be glad to use any influence which we may have in preventing in."

Mr. Robert S. Maestri, Commissioner, Department of Conservation, Louisiana:

"I will be pleased to have you transmit to this office a copy of the bill which you have caused to be introduced in the General Assembly of Maryland, which is now in session."

Mr. J. M. Witsell, Chairman, Board of Fisheries of South Carolina:

"I wish to thank you very much for your letter of March 6th with the enclosed section of *The* (Baltimore) *Sun* relative to Japanese oysters. We have been having quite a number of inquiries here relative to this oyster and have taken it up with the U. S. Bureau of Fisheries, and as you have stated, they have advised against the planting of these oysters in this section. I have discouraged it in every way possible and there are no Japanese oysters in this State at present."

Mr. William J. Tucker, Exec. Secy., Game, Fish and Oyster Commission of Texas:

"Thanks very much for your letter of March 6th and enclosure of a secton of *The* (Baltimore) *Sun* with the fine article by Alan Lawe, which I read with great interest. I shall give this matter my immediate attention looking toward the desirability of introducing a bill in the present session of our Legislature, which would make it unlawful to plant Japanese oysters seed in Texas waters. If you have any further information on this subject I hope you will do me the favor of letting me have it."

Mr. John A. Nelson, Fisheries Commissioner, Department of Conservation and Development, North Carolina:

"Just in receipt of your letter of March 6th enclosing a supplement from *The* (Baltimore) *Sun* with a very interesting article on the Japanese oysters. Our Legislature is now in session, and I will be glad to get an act through prohibiting the planting of them in North Carolina."

This proposed action by North Carolina is of extreme importance to Maryland, as much oyster seed from this State is used by our Chesapeake Bay planters.

Mr. I. T. Quinn, Commissioner, Department of Game and Fisheries of Alabama:

"No Japanese oysters have been imported and planted in the Alabama waters, and while we have no statute which prohibits it, those who are interestd in oyster culture and development along the Alabama coast are opposed to the introduction of these oysters in our water and on our bottoms. I am glad that the State of Maryland is taking action on the proposed legislation. I trust that this legislation will be enacted into law.

"This country is already suffering from a promiscuous importation of certain species of fish and birds from foreign countries. I mention the carp as a species of fish that should never have been brought to this country, likewise the English sparrow and the Starling."

OYSTER PACKER WANTS TO SEE SHELL PLANTING CONTINUED

MR. SWEPSON EARLE,
Conservation Department,
Baltimore, Maryland.

Dear Sir: May I express my opinion on the fight that is being made in the Legislature to take away the gasoline tax on workboats that is now being used to carry on shell planting? I earnestly hope the Conservation Department will do everything in its power to keep this tax to support its shell planting work, which is just beginning to show results.

I have discussed this question with many of our oystermen and tried to show them that to stop shell planting means that the packers will have to cut prices of shell stock 5% on each bushel of oysters in order to balance their profits, which is now done by the sale of shells. Also that the oystermen will not have the benefit from the oyster bars, if the planting of shells and small oysters is stopped, as they will not give them a livelihood.

I know some expenses can be done away with to ease the burden of taxation, but I am not in favor of crippling the Department we are working under. I am in favor of holding on our Inspectors for the protection of small oysters, and we do not want to set aside anything that will cut down the efficiency of the Department. I have written our Senator to support the interests of the Department.

Very truly yours,

C. S. VANSANT,
Rock Hall, Maryland.

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE?

AN INTERVIEW with Mr. Howard W. Beach of New Haven, Connecticut, President of the Oyster Growers and Dealers Association of North America, published in a recent number of the magazine *"Fishing,"* develops the interesting information that the starfish, that much dreaded enemy of the oyster, may contain valuable medicinal properties.

According to Mr. Beach, the Department of Organic Chemistry at Yale University is much interested in marine life, and Dr. Johnson, head of the Department, has been supplied with a large variety of water forms, including the starfish. The scientist detailed to carry on the investigation in connection with this animal, has found it to contain what is apparently a very important medicinal product. It seemed so important to those in charge of the Department that the young scientist has been sent back to Germany with his findings to consult with the director of the great university where he got his training. It also developed that one of our well-known medical concerns in America recently sent some starfish products to Germany to be studied, and it is believed that some-

thing of value may be developed from the efforts of the two groups of investigators. Accordingly, says Mr. Beach, "what has been a menace to the oyster planter may prove to be an exceedingly important factor in the welfare and health of the people, as well as providing a means, a profitable means, of getting rid of one of our pests."

OYSTERS SEEK DREDGE

CAPTAIN ORVILLE H. PARKS of Wingate, Maryland, sent the Department the interesting photograph shown below. The old dredge, on which the oysters were found growing, had been lost overboard, and when pulled up off the mouth of Hooper Straits by the skipjack IDA MAY recently, was found

ANOTHER "GOOD CATCH"

to contain a bushel of oysters. Captain Parks stated that a great many more were knocked off while towing the dredge, before it could be placed on the deck of the vessel.

A collection of curious objects to which oysters have been found attached is on display in the Department's offices in Baltimore. These oddities range from a pair of old rubber boots to a set of false teeth. The oyster, when abandoning its free-swimming existence in the early stages of its life, to

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seek a permanent abiding place, does not discriminate in its selection of a place of attachment, and an old dredge, an empty bottle or even a pair of shell-rimmed spectacles may present an equally attractive surface to the young bivalve.

BROOK AND RAINBOW TROUT PLACED IN THE TROUT STREAMS OF MARYLAND—BETWEEN OCTOBER 1932 AND MARCH 11, 1933

ALL LEGAL SIZE (7 INCHES AND OVER)

	Brook Trout	Rainbow Trout
ANNE ARUNDEL Co.		
Kitten Run	150	-----
Severn (above Crain Highway)	1,360	-----
Adams Branch	150	-----
	1,660	
BALTIMORE Co.		
Patapsco	60	-----
Piney Run	120	-----
Beaver Dam Branch	60	-----
Long Quarter Branch	60	-----
Owl Branch	100	-----
Deep Run	100	-----
Line Kiln Run	250	-----
Pot Spring Branch	250	-----
White's Branch	100	-----
	1,100	
FREDERICK Co.		
Fishing Creek	2,735	-----
Big Huntng Creek	1,720	-----
Little Hunting Creek	700	-----
Fishing Creek	----	300
	5,155	
HARFORD Co.		
Evans Run	150	-----
HOWARD Co.		
Little Patuxent	400	-----
East Branch	275	-----
Sucker Branch	75	-----
	750	

	Brook Trout	Rainbow Trout
GARRETT Co.		
Glade Run	200	-----
Savage River	1,700	-----
Rock Lick	60	-----
Hoys Run	80	-----
Sang Run	80	-----
Gap Run	140	-----
Ball Hill Run	140	-----
White Rock	500	-----
Bear Creek	3,500	-----
Broad Ford	300	-----
Cherry Creek	900	-----
Trout Run	300	-----
Murley Creek	300	-----
Shields Run	300	-----
Herring Creek	300	-----
Deep Creek Lake	600	-----
Youghioheny River	----	210
	(Brood Stock)	
Bear Creek	----	200
Dunkard Run	----	100
		510
	9,400	
WASHINGTON Co.		
Little Tonoloway Creek		440
Forney Young Run		280
Little Marsh Run		280
Marsh Run (or St. James Run)		715
Extines Run		390
Rush Run (or Trout Run)		320
		2,425

Total trout placed in trout streams—*18,215 Brook, 3,235 Rainbow Trout.*

Superintendent of Hatcheries, A. M. Powell, reports that we are holding for distribution after opening of season, eighteen thousand (18,000) more fish which will assure good fishing throughout the season.

PLANS FOR GREATER DISTRIBUTION OF CRABS

WITH the opening of the crab season not more than six weeks off (May 1, being the official date), plans have been under way for some time to increase the demand for this crustacean during the forthcoming summer months. The crab survey completed by the Conservation Department last year brought out some remarkable facts. It was estimated that one-third of the crab production of Maryland during the past two years has been improperly marketed. The bulk of the supply is consumed mainly by four nearby cities, viz: Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia and New York; little or no crabs or crab meat being shipped west of Pittsburg, although the supply has increased from 29 million pounds in 1925 to approximately 68 million pounds in 1931. No effort has been made to secure new markets to utilize this increase and the over-stocking of the nearby markets naturally caused a great waste and a consequent depression in the prices received by those engaged in the industry.

The Conservation Commissioner has endeavored to secure for Maryland one of the large quick-freezing plants, and while this may not be successfully put through this coming season, it is believed that in another year this will be accomplished. However, it will not be necessary to handle but a part of Maryland's crab supply by this method; new markets will certainly take care of 50% of the present over-production, and crab packing units have been organized at Crisfield in Somerset County, also in Kent, Queen Anne, Talbot and Dorchester Counties for the purpose of working out a plan for cooperative marketing. Mr. Earle has also arranged with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to take a committee of crab packers, some time in May, to visit several western cities within easy access of the crab packing centers of Maryland, which are potential markets for this sea food.

It is also believed that the legalization of the manufacture and sale of beer will stimulate the demand for crabs, and indeed for all sea food, as this beverage has always been considered a fitting accompaniment to sea food. Restaurants will probably make the best of this famous combination.